

## Szymanowski - Violin Concertos, Caprices and Romance (2013)

Written by bluesever

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Concerto for Violin no 1, Op. 35 01 - *Vivace assai* - *Tempo comodo: andantino* - *Subito vivace assai* – 02 - *Vivace scherzando* (Fig. 52) - *Tempo comodo: allegretto* - *Vivace* – 03 - *Cadenza* (*Vivace*) - *Allegro moderato* - *Lento assai* Concerto for Violin no 2, Op. 61 04 - *Moderato* - *Andante sostenuto* - *Tempo I* - *Cadenza* – 05 - *Allegramente, molto energico* (Fig. 26) - 06 - *Andantino molto tranquillo* (Fig. 40) - *Tempo I* (*Allegramente, animato*) Three Paganini Caprices, Op. 40 07 - I. *Caprice No.20* (*Andante dolcissimo* - *Vivace scherzando* - *Andante dolcissimo*) 08 - II. *Caprice No.21* (*Adagio*) 09 - III. *Thème Varié. Caprice No.24* 10. *Romance for Violin and Piano in D major, Op. 23* Thomas Zehetmair - violin Silke Avenhaus – piano City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra Simon Rattle – conductor

This disc received the 1997 Gramophone award for "Best Concerto Recording". At the helm of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Simon Rattle consistently delivers inspired and nuanced performances of late romantic works, outstanding in every way. This EMI Classics release of Karol Szymanowski's violin concertos with violinist Thomas Zehetmair is no exception. Foremost are a sense of drama and a care for detail mixed with characteristically bold exuberance and rhythmic drive. Dynamic contrasts abound, and the sense of musical climax is especially satisfying.

Szymanowski wrote his two violin concertos and several shorter violin pieces for his close friend Pawel Kochanski. EMI gives us sparkling accounts of these, highlighting the lush orchestration and the wondrous, disconcerting harmonic landscape which is reminiscent of Scriabin, Strauss and early Stravinsky. Rattle explores the music, probing the composer's shifting textures without ever getting ahead of himself and giving a sense of where the moment may lead and, as a result, providing a real sense of discovery through hard-earned moments of revelation. The pieces for violin and piano showcase Zehetmair's prodigious talents ably accompanied by Silke

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Avenhaus. --- arkivmusic.com

For the First Concerto, Rattle offers a beautifully lucid reading, unusual in that it resists all temptation to serve up an undifferentiated oriental mush (the concerto dates from the wartime Ukraine period, when Szymanowski conjured up most of his lushest mystical orchestral songs), and draws it instead closer to the great mainstream Romantic concertos. Zehetmair is crucial to this. His solo part is a kind of gossamer strand, never overstated, helped by a shyish vibrato, beautiful clarity of line, rhythmic alertness and an intuitive rubato. A beautiful utterance, and never milked. Rattle supports (indeed shapes) the approach with crystal-clear textures from Miraculous Mandarin-type opening to magical final evanescence. Tiny flickers of firefly woodwind – a bassoon peering through the fugal textures, for example – make of this an unforgettable journey. Some will miss the usual appealing, shimmering surface; but the gain in detail is enormous. The Second feels less successful: for Wanda Wilkomirska it was a kind of glorious, wild, foot-tapping Slavonic mountain romp; Marco Polo's soloist, Roman Lasocki, is mellower and sultrier. Zehetmair's cadenza work entrances, but his long-bowed legato sweetness rather shades out the East European sparkiness (which Chantal Juillet captures on Decca). One idiomatic woodwind passage in the linking central movement, with violin mutterings above, suggests how things might better have been approached. ---Roderic Dunnett, classical-music.com

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